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## The Joan Mitchell Center: Retreat, Reflection, and Reciprocity (Internship Report)

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The Joan Mitchell Center: Retreat, Reflection, and Reciprocity

An Internship Report

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the  
University of New Orleans in  
partial fulfillment of the  
requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts  
In  
Arts Administration

By

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## **ABSTRACT**

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The following report serves as a culmination of my 480-hour internship with the Joan Mitchell Center Artist Residency Program ( also referred to as “The Center” or “JMC”). As the intern for Community Engagement, I was afforded the opportunity to work closely with the Director and staff across an array of areas including community outreach, public programs and event planning. This report will function as a summary of the organization’s history, programming, and tasks and functions associated with my role. In addition, it will highlight best practices for artist residencies, analyze the Center’s current state of operation, and offer recommendations based upon the aforementioned guidelines.

## CHAPTER 1: ORGANIZATIONAL OVERVIEW

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### *History*

Since its formation four years ago, the Joan Mitchell Center Artist Residency Program has seen its fair share of change: expansion through a large capital project, two programmatic pilots, leadership changes, and a variety of collaborations with local, national, and international organizations. The efforts put forth thus far would not have been possible without the initial investment of the Joan Mitchell Foundation and its dedication to the preservation of the legacy of artist Joan Mitchell.

Joan Mitchell was a Chicago-born abstract expressionist painter, known for being a pioneer and resource to fellow artists and makers alike. As a celebration of her legacy, the Joan Mitchell Foundation was created to expand her vision of supporting “the aspirations and development of diverse contemporary artists.”<sup>1</sup> Since 1993 the Foundation has worked to broaden the recognition of artists and their communities and society as a whole by remaining:

- Artist-centered
- Intentionally diverse
- Invested in collaboration
- Nimble and responsive
- Respectful of multiple perspectives
- Working to create fairer, more just communities<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Joan Mitchell Foundation Overview:

<http://joanmitchellfoundation.org/about/overview#sthash.kcJlfdOo.dpuf>

<sup>2</sup> <http://joanmitchellfoundation.org/about/overview#sthash.kcJlfdOo.dpuf>

In 2008, the Joan Mitchell Foundation began providing emergency support to artists in the city of New Orleans through Career Opportunity Grants given to unrecognized artists in need of professional opportunities. The Foundation also collaborated with the Arts Council of New Orleans in supporting *Art in Public Places*, which fostered the creation of nineteen new, site-specific works which were transplanted across New Orleans. Two years later, the Foundation furthered its investment into the city through *Joan Mitchell in New Orleans: Works on Paper*, an exhibition showcasing more than 100 of Joan's works. The exhibit included a symposium on Joan Mitchell's life and work, three concurrent exhibitions at Tulane's Newcomb Gallery, the New Orleans Museum of Art, the Contemporary Arts Center, and a number of educational workshops and resources. That same year, the Foundation purchased the former "House on Bayou Road" with the hopes of creating an arts center and residency program: The Joan Mitchell Center.

### ***Mission and Vision***

Based in the culturally diverse and historic city of New Orleans, the Joan Mitchell Center's mission is to support local, national, and international contemporary visual artists.

The Joan Mitchell Center strives to be a place for creation, innovation, and transformation; supporting values of community, diversity, and social equity;

providing a forum for artists to be a welcoming, inclusive gathering space for the arts and broader community of New Orleans.<sup>3</sup>

### ***Organizational Structure***

The Joan Mitchell Center is categorized as an Artist Program of the Joan Mitchell Foundation and functions as a limited liability company (LLC). A limited liability company is a kind of legal structure that provides an entity with the limited liability benefits of a corporation while also granting the flexibility of a partnership. The Center, along with the other programs and components of the Joan Mitchell Foundation are overseen by an eight member board<sup>4</sup>:

Alejandro Anreus, Ph.D., President  
Tomie Arai, Vice-President  
Theodore S. Berger, Treasurer  
Ronald Bechet  
Dan Bergman  
Tyrone Mitchell  
Yolanda Shashaty  
Michele Tortorelli

The staff structure is broadly divided into three categories: Programs, Operations, Facilities/Hospitality. Staff consists of the following roles:

**Executive Director | Carolyn Somers:** Carolyn is responsible for implementing and overseeing the overall vision of the of the Joan Mitchell Foundation.

**JMC Director | Gia Hamilton:** Gia is responsible for implementing and overseeing the overall vision of the of the Joan Mitchell Center, and managing all members of staff, programmatic elements and long term planning in collaboration with the Executive Director.

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<sup>3</sup> <http://joanmitchellfoundation.org/artist-programs/center>

<sup>4</sup> <http://joanmitchellfoundation.org/about/board#sthash.laSWm8F4.dpuf>

**Program Associate | Tara Foster:** Tara oversees the day-to-day functions of the New Orleans Local Artist (NOLA) Studio Program while managing the execution of numerous public programs and various forms of artist support under the direction of the Program Director.

**Office Administrator | Danielle Smith:** Danielle is responsible for overseeing the administrative practices associated with the Center, as well as coordinating guest stay, and arranging all IT/technical needs related to programming under the direction of the Program Director.

**Hospitality Manager | Frank Gleber:** Frank coordinates orientation and guest meals. He works along with the Facilities Manager and Hospitality Associate to support event prep including, but not limited, the preparation of meals, décor and spatial design. In addition, all three staff members oversee the maintenance and upkeep of the property's foliage and aesthetic under the direction of the Program Director.

**Facilities Manager | Ted Martin:** In addition to the tasks above, Ted acts as the knowledge base for all plant life on the property. In addition, he creates amazing floral designs and décor utilizing what is present on the grounds of the Center.

**Hospitality Associate | Silvia Chamale:** In addition sharing tasks and workflow with Frank and Ted, Silvia oversees the turnover and upkeep of guest rooms inside the Center's main house.



**Weekend Coordinator | Sandy Thornburg:** Sandy functions in a similar capacity as Frank and Ted outside of the Center's normal business hours (specifically Saturdays/Sundays). She is the guest's primary point of contact outside of the Center's weekday business hours.

### ***Residency/Programs***

The Joan Mitchell Center's Artist Residency Program is its central focus, with various public programs and professional development acting as supplemental means of supporting its overall vision: to provide time-space-place for artists to create and feel supported. Thus far, the Center has piloted two residency models. In 2013, the Joan Mitchell Center piloted its traditional residency program by extending an invitation to all Joan Mitchell Foundation recipients of the Painters and Sculptors Grant award and the MFA Grant award. Twenty-four artists were selected to participate over a six-month period.<sup>5</sup>

After formally joining the Center as Director, Gia designed the New Orleans Local Artist Studio (NOLA) Program, which was developed for emerging local artists who were in need of studio space and professional development.<sup>6</sup> Ten artists were selected and divided into two groups of five studio-mates. Both groups received 5 months of studio space, stipends, and professional development throughout the duration of the 10-month residency period.

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<sup>5</sup> "Foreword." Convergence. Joan Mitchell Center.

<sup>6</sup> Foreword." Convergence. Joan Mitchell Center.

Artists were afforded numerous opportunities to participate in various forms of programming and professional development during their residency period.

Professional development included:

- **Peer to Peer Critiques**
- **Studio Visits**
- **AIR Share Dinners**
- **Open Studios**
- **Artist Talks**
- **Career Development Works**

Additionally, the Joan Mitchell Center curates and produces public programming which currently consists of the following:

- **Open Studios and Artist Talks** are key elements of the Artist In Residence (AIR) Program and the New Orleans Local Artist (NOLA) Studio Program. During Open Studios, the public is invited to view work in progress and engage directly with the resident artists. Artist Talks offer more in-depth presentations by visiting artists, allowing greater insight into their work and process.
- **Community Coffees** serve as an open house for the Joan Mitchell Center and as a networking space for the New Orleans community. Community Coffees offer an opportunity for artists, curators, writers and arts administrators staying at the Joan Mitchell Center to connect with locals in the neighborhood.
- **Visual MashUp**, a semi-annual series, is an informal presentation and after hours networking event that promotes the work of artists. For each

event, two or more painters and sculptors are “mashed up” with artists from other disciplines and geographical locations. The Visual MashUp offers a unique opportunity for a partner to curate the group of presenters and to host an interactive networking event.

- **Town Hall Convenings** are panel discussions with a call and response style format that allow the larger arts community to respond to relevant and timely topics. The Joan Mitchell Center embraces a role as a safe space for dialogues that have the potential of shifting the current landscape. Town Hall Convenings allow the Joan Mitchell Center to collaborate with local, national and international partners.<sup>7</sup>

### ***Guest Stay/Site Use***

Numerous local, national, and international organizations and artists can and have applied for guest stays and site use at the Joan Mitchell Center. The Center grants housing and use of its programmatic space to arts organizations that are partnering with curators, critics, arts administrators and other visual arts. In the past, the Center’s event space, Indigo, has functioned as a nexus for organizational meetings, retreats, and other special events. The three rooms within the main house are reserved for guest stay; they are offered as in-kind donations to partner organizations, as well as direct support to individual artists and affiliates, with one night’s stay equaling \$275.00.

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<sup>7</sup> Joan Mitchell Center Programmatic Overview: See Appendix.

***Facilities:***

The Joan Mitchell Center's campus currently consists of seven pre-existing buildings, and one addition that is currently under development:

- **Main House:** The Joan Mitchell Center's main house currently acts as a housing option for guests and affiliates. The space also houses the organization's main office, communal dining and living spaces, and the on-site staff's living quarters.
- **Indigo:** Indigo functions as a space for public events and various forms of programming. Its use will expand as programming becomes more developed in preparation for the launch of the Center's artist in residence program.
- **Kumquat/Bayou Self:** Both buildings function as additional guest housing, as well as living space for the Executive Director when she is located in New Orleans. In the future, these spaces will be used to accommodate resident artists.
- **Val's/Clency's/La'Mour:** These three buildings were purchased with the intent to develop additional guest housing and storage spaces. The exact schematics for each space have not been finalized.
- **Studios:** The Center currently leases studio space on N. Rampart. The offsite space consists of 5 artist studios, two common areas, and a small kitchen and media lab. In preparation for the launch of the artist in

residence program, the Center has undergone a capital project to build a state of the art studio building onsite, directly behind the Center's main house.

### ***Financial Summary***

As stated previously, the Joan Mitchell operates as a Limited Liability Company under the direction of the Joan Mitchell Foundation. In essence, this means that the Center functions as a line item on the Foundation's operational budget and is allocated a set amount of funding each fiscal year. The Foundation itself is funded primarily through the sale of Joan Mitchell's work and does not solicit funding from outside sources.

Over 50% of the Center's budget is dedicated to programming, with the remainder divided amongst site maintenance and other administrative expenses. I believe it is worth noting an example of the type of investment that the Center has made in local artists thus far. An average of \$20,000 per artist was spent on the ten NOLA Studio Program artists, which totals over \$200,000 spent over the course of a year. As the program and site continues to develop, it is clear that budget numbers will need to shift in order to properly support the program, buildings, and staff. Much of the Director and Executive Director's time is spent planning and calculating costs to reflect a variety of scenarios and residency model formats.

## **CHAPTER 2: INTERNSHIP SUMMARY**

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My internship with the Joan Mitchell Center took place between January 6 – May 30, 2014. Following the completion of my internship duties, I was brought on as an independent contractor, and as of August 2014, I joined the Center's staff full time as Program Associate for Community Engagement. This summary will focus solely on my tasks and experiences as an intern.

My responsibilities as an intern were divided into one of three categories:

1. Programmatic Support
2. Community Engagement
3. General Administrative Support

In addition, I was assigned a long-term, research-based project, which consisted primarily of me compiling information to be entered into an organizational database entitled "Art Scan." My internship period began with me joining the rest of the staff for an annual planning retreat, during which the team gathers to gain discuss plans and expectations for the year and create a fresh start.

Immediately following the meeting I began working closely with Gia to familiarize myself with the Center, its culture and methods of operation.

### **Programmatic Support**

I was able to become thoroughly involved in the early stages of my internship, during which I was welcomed and treated as a member of staff.

My programmatic tasks encompassed the following:

- Organizing and preparing of materials for professional development engagements (i.e. Creative Capital, Artist Talks, and Career Development workshops)
- Serving as a docent at the JMC Rampart Studios during Open Studios and Visual MashUp.
- Developing an “Artist Guide to Press Kits” as a resource to the NOLA Studio Program participants.
- Designing event materials for distribution and promotion including flyers, biographies and other takeaways.
- Offering input and collecting notes during Artist-in-Residence planning meetings
- Following up with artists about pressing deadlines and submissions.
- Offering support to artists participating in JMC programming (i.e Visual MashUp/ Second Saturdays).

### **Community Engagement:**

The Center, in its infancy, is still developing the way in which it defines “community engagement.” Through creating reciprocal relationships with local institutions, the Center seeks to incorporate itself and its artists into the city in a thoughtful way with lasting impacts that extend beyond residency cycles. I was given the task of assisting with the solidification of this concept through:

- Acting as a liaison between the public and JMC during public events, both internal and external. (ex. The New Orleans Loving Festival)

- Educating the Joan Mitchell Center Audience on its programs, intentions, and overall mission and vision
- Canvassing the local neighborhood to increase our visibility and brand while also building relationships with nearby neighbors and businesses
- Arranging preliminary meetings with between JMC and other local arts and culture organizations to discuss and plan partnerships
- Developing Memorandums of Understanding to be reviewed and signed by the Center and parties that agreed to undertake a partnership

### **General Administrative Support**

In order to streamline certain processes and better organize the day-to-day operation of the office, I was asked to:

- Develop systems for filing community partner documents, compiling event setup into a useable checklist, tracking on and off-site inventory, and organizing documentation from past programming and site use events
- Work closely with Gia to assist with managing her calendar, travel, and meeting schedule
- Attend and transcribe meetings as needed
- Assist programmatic and operations staff with event setup and clerical needs

### **Art Scan**

The “NOLA Art Scan” functions as a document that will serve as an internal reference guide for staff and artists, containing a general overview of as



well as programmatic information for nearly every arts and culture organization within the city of New Orleans. When I took on the project, the database had been under the early stages of development, containing information that had been collected over the course of the Center's inception. Most of what was previously included required updating, and there were numerous gaps that needed to be filled given the amount of growth that has occurred within the arts in New Orleans. The document itself was broken into several categories including, but not limited to: art and culture museums, universities, social aid and pleasure clubs, and galleries. Each organization's profile included information regarding its mission, points of contact and geographic location. It was my responsibility to create a more comprehensive list based upon the city's current cultural landscape and divide the pre-existing categories into coded subcategories based upon mission and programming. My research concluded with submitting the spreadsheet for review and editing to later be integrated into a functioning database.

**Conclusion:**

My work within the role of intern gave me a deeper understanding of what it means to work within a start-up atmosphere and assess the challenges and high points of developing a new organization. I feel that my experience was especially unique in that I was able to view and work within the local arts arena through the lens of both insider and outsider: a Louisiana native working for a "New York-based" organization.

## CHAPTER 3: S.W.O.T. ANALYSIS

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<b>Strengths</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Leadership/Team</li><li>2. Network/Partners</li><li>3. Residency</li></ol>	<b>Weaknesses</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Branding</li><li>2. Internal practices &amp; structure</li><li>3. Space</li><li>4. Capacity</li></ol>
<b>Opportunities</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Site as point of reference</li><li>2. Development of programming</li><li>3. Community involvement</li><li>4. Staff expansion</li></ol>	<b>Threats</b> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Public perception</li><li>2. Costs/Expectations</li></ol>

### Strengths

#### 1. Leadership/Team

The Joan Mitchell Center team is not only effective, but overall a great group of individuals to work with. The staff is extremely supportive, knows how to collaborate well together and consistently works to bring new ideas to the table. In addition, Gia's ability to implement and execute initiatives and long term planning is impressive, and she also strives to set the tone for a collective team spirit. This culture is clearly embraced and perpetuated by everyone on site.

## **2. Network/Partners**

The fact that the Center can reference community partners and past collaborations helps to build its rapport locally, nationally and internationally. These partnerships gather organizations together in one central space, with the Center acting as a conduit for creative thought through collaboration. Furthermore, the Center has access to an expansive network of curators, critics, and arts professionals, all of who assist with the provision of professional development to JMC artists.

## **3. Residency**

The residency program being developed by the Joan Mitchell Center is first of its kind in New Orleans, both programmatically and physically. The anticipation of what's to come has created a buzz within the city, and I feel as though the community overall is excited to see what the residency will bring forth, as well as ways in which they can contribute to its maturation. This program's implementation will allow the Center to broaden the Foundation's overall reach and visibility locally, nationally and internationally.

## **Weaknesses**

### **1. Branding**

Many studies have found that brands can strengthen the power of organizations by increasing customer loyalty and developing a differentiated or clear identity.<sup>8</sup> The Center currently lacks a strong cohesive brand, a challenge typical to new organizations. Often times, JMC is confused with the Foundation, which often leads to inquiries that should be redirected to the New York office, as well as the spread of misinformation regarding the Center's capabilities and internal structure. Also, most individuals outside of the arts and culture sector are not familiar with the concept of an artist residency, and often times associate the Center with a negative perception of a "colony" or "commune". By offering context for programming, inviting the public into the space to break insularity, and further developing its website and social media presence, the Center can begin to shift its overall brand.

### **2. Internal practices & structure**

There are still several systems that need further development in order for the office and programs to run smoothly. There are pre-existing practices that exist for office needs, guest stay, filing, etc. but most have yet to be compiled in a way that is streamlined and accessible to all staff.

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<sup>8</sup> Z. Ding. "Branding in Arts Organizations."  
[https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap/10?0::NO:10:P10\\_ACCESSION\\_NUM:akron1297979840](https://etd.ohiolink.edu/ap/10?0::NO:10:P10_ACCESSION_NUM:akron1297979840)

As planning for the launch of the AIR program continues, the staff should take time to develop these documents and strategies as a team, so that everyone may be brought up to speed and be able to support and fill in where needed.

### **3. Space**

There is a lack of functionality within the house, specifically the main office. There are currently storage solutions located within the office and on the property that are reaching maximum capacity, some of which will be converted to serve a different function for the residency. There is also no true breakout/meeting space that isn't interrupted by the flow of foot traffic. As the site plans are developed further, I would hope that alternatives would be presented to create additional spaces to fit the future needs of staff.

### **4. Capacity**

The staff of 8 currently supports a residency pilot, public programming, site use and guest stay. This often requires individuals to work beyond a typical 40 hour work week. Moral and energy levels still remain high; once the residency is functioning at maximum capacity, however, I predict that the current workflow could lead to staff burnout.

## **Opportunities**

### **1. JMC Residency Program as point of reference**

The Joan Mitchell Center has the potential to set the standard for other urban artist residencies in today's art world, especially those within cities

that possess unique cultures and backstories as New Orleans does. Additionally, organizations will be able to use the Center as a point of reference as it pertains to community engagement and partnership. This will require a great deal of assessment, documentation, and implementation of well researched best practices, successes and failures that have been tested and/or recorded by other organizations.

## **2. Development of programming**

The Center can further develop programmatic consistency by building on programs that have a strong presence and solid branding, while also recreating/redeveloping those that have more room for improvement. With the addition of new spaces on the campus there are also opportunities to invent programming that activates these areas in a fresh way.

## **3. Community involvement**

As the organization looks into long term planning, a conversation should be had surrounding ways to get the surrounding community more involved in what the Center does. Whether through reaching out to the youth, nearby families, or neighboring schools and businesses there are numerous opportunities to incorporate the community into the space and create less of a “commune” feeling.

## **4. Staff expansion**

The Center could certainly benefit from the support of additional staff

members, especially as the AIR launch draws near. New Orleans is also home to a variety of arts Masters Programs, including Arts Administration and Museum Studies. Incorporating interns from such programs into the fold of the Center could be a beneficial experience for all parties involved.

## **Threats**

### **1. Public Perception**

As the proverbial “new kid on the block,” the Joan Mitchell Center has been watched closely as it lays its roots within the city. Many organizations and individuals err on the side of skepticism when analyzing organizations from other cities, especially those that have originated in Northern regions. The Center is especially unique to the Center

### **2. Costs/Expectations**

During this planning process, it is imperative that JMC leadership and staff balance the expectations of workload and cost in relation to next year’s residency. 2015 will be the first time that all buildings will be functioning at the same time, in addition to artists residing and working on site. Without careful planning, task administration and monitoring, the residency program could prove to be a financially exhausting endeavor that depletes more of the Center and Foundation’s capital than originally anticipated.

## **CHAPTER 4: BEST PRACTICES AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

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In order to best serve its constituents, visual artists and the local community, the Joan Mitchell Center should strive to be a leader in implementing current best practices and setting trends based upon the execution of those guidelines. Though there are several organizations that support the development of artist residencies, I believe the Alliance of Artist Communities (AAC) possesses the most comprehensive explanation of trends and practices that can best support the Center in its youth and periods of growth.

### **About the Alliance**

In 1990, the MacArthur Foundation advocated for the creation of AAC to nurture the process of creation at a time when it was important to reaffirm the essential freedom that is necessary for all creative accomplishment.<sup>9</sup> AAC was created to recognize creative process and the exploration of new ideas as essential to human progress. The Alliance currently functions as an international association of artist residencies that supports artists of any discipline in the development of new creative work, with over 400 members (organizations and individuals) in 43 states and 17 countries.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Alliance of Artist Communities History:  
<http://www.artistcommunities.org/history>

<sup>10</sup> About the Alliance of Artist Communities:  
<http://www.artistcommunities.org/about>



## **Lessons Learned**

The Alliance of Artists Communities offers insight into best practices through numerous invaluable online and published resources. As a point of reference for my recommendations, I have chosen to utilize the AAC's "Lessons Learned" publication series. These reports explore common questions and issues that arise within a variety of residency models, and offer ideas and advice to incorporate into informed decision making when problem solving.

### ***Lessons Learned- Artist Residencies: Facilities Planning***

This study discusses capital campaigns in addition to the planning and renovation of new and pre-existing spaces. Ann Brady, Director of the Rauschenberg Residency, offered insight on practices that should be executed by residency staff when managing a capital campaign. There were three recommendations that I felt were particularly relevant to the Joan Mitchell Center, given that it is currently undergoing a capital project and various forms of site development:<sup>11</sup>

- Conduct a Feasibility Study: It is a wise investment to hire an outside consultant to work with the board and staff to clearly articulate why the organization needs the project in addition to internally assessing if the staff can handle the added workload and organizational shifts that may occur. This will not only allow all parties involved to have a clear understanding of the project's relevance, but also offer the best plan as to how money should be spent.

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<sup>11</sup> Brady, Fishero, Teague, Tillett. "Capital Campaigns." *Lessons Learned*. 2013

- Include contingencies and building reserves into your budget: The Center should convene with the board to discuss how funds are being allocated with the capital project and push to ensure that there are plans in place should the project exceed estimates.
- Support your leadership through the challenges: Transition can be a difficult time for everyone during project development. Leadership should continue to exude strength and positivity, and staff should strive to understand that the present challenges are only temporary.

### *Planning a New Space: Architect's Perspective*

Additionally, architect Harry Teague, designer of Anderson Ranch Arts Center describes 6 key factors to consider when planning out a new studio and gallery space: <sup>12</sup>

- Light and space are the most important elements: Good lighting and flexibility are key when designing workspaces. The organization should ensure that artists have access to both natural and good artificial lighting within their studios.
- Turn things inside out: Studios should ideally allow access to outdoor areas and not create such an insular experience within the workspace.
- Make the most of space: The size of most studios varies based upon artist needs. JMC should be mindful that sculptors, painters, and printmakers often create large-scale work and may require a room that has both a reasonable amount of width and height.

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<sup>12</sup>. "Planning a New Space." *Lessons Learned*. 2013

- Power up: The last thing the Center should want to create are “bottlenecks” of plugs and outlets throughout the studio space; it is better to plan for numerous outlets early on and over-compensate, rather than having to work backwards and attempt to create more options after construction has been completed.
- Breathe easy: Proper ventilation creates the safest possible environment for artists working with hazardous materials.
- Form follows function: The studios on-site at the Center will serve as state of the art workspaces for visiting artists. However, their sole purpose is to act as spaces of creation and reflection for artists. The studios should be constructed in such a way that is functional and durable while also being aesthetically pleasing.

### *Planning a New Space: Architect’s Perspective*

In a similar fashion, Mark Fishero, architect for the McColl Center for Visual Art discusses best practices for renovating pre-existing spaces to meet the needs of artists and programming. The following tips should serve as guidelines for JMC staff when meeting with its site development team:<sup>13</sup>

- Form Close ties with building related partners: Due to the Center’s main house being a historic site, it is particularly important there is an assigned representative that acts as the JMC liaison for zoning and code meetings
- When it comes to communal space, take programmatic goals into consideration: If certain spaces are meant to foster a sense of

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<sup>13</sup> “Renovating Space.” *Lessons Learned. 2013*

togetherness and group interaction, it should be equipped with the necessary tools to make it function (furniture, etc.).

- Embrace your vision and stick with it: As other staff and site team members become involved with the planning process, the original vision for the space can get lost or distorted in the shuffle. The Center should remain steadfast about its needs and expectations for this capital project.

### **Lessons Learned- Engaging Communities**

*“[...] The issues are different here (in the South). It takes longer to penetrate barriers of race and class, and to allay fears of being abandoned once a relationship is established.”<sup>14</sup>*

- Michael Patterson, Interim E.D. – Project Row Houses

A large part of my work as an intern at the Center involved dealing directly with the public, therefore I found it only right to highlight what AAC views as best practice for artist residencies regarding engaging communities:<sup>15</sup>

- One size doesn’t fit all: It is explained that the process of engagement and peer learning should be “organic rather than imposed.” <sup>16</sup>As these relationships arise out of their own individually unique contexts the Center should not focus too heavily on a “cookie cutter” best practices approach. Especially in a city such as New Orleans, it would best serve

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<sup>14</sup> Atlas, Brunner, Denobriga, Roecklein. *Engaging Communities. Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg 11.

<sup>15</sup> “Engaging Communities.” *Lessons Learned*. 2004.

<sup>16</sup> “Engaging Communities.” *Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg. 8.

the organization and its constituents to create “better practices” as it relates to the particular needs and personality of the city.

- Context is everything: The text describes communities as “multifaceted, complex, and constantly changing.”<sup>17</sup> This proves particularly true for the past and current states of our city. Many areas are thriving culturally, yet still display a great deal of economic disparity and face the threat of gentrification on a consistent basis. The Center should always keep this at the forefront as it continues to engage with and adapt to its surroundings, which also happens to be one of the oldest and most culturally diverse neighborhoods in New Orleans.
- Mission matters: JMC should examine what this report references as its role as “organizational public citizen.” UCross President Michelle Sullivan offers the following as it relates to organizational responsibility:

*“The organization itself needs to serve as a channel for community engagement and not just rely on the individual artists in residence to provide that connection.”*<sup>18</sup>

The resident artists at the Center will come and go throughout the program’s existence, but the organization itself is a more permanent community member and has a responsibility to act as a resource and leave positive impacts. By the same token, however, being committed to this role is taxing and highly involved work. JMC must understand how to

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<sup>17</sup> “Engaging Communities.” *Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg. 8.

<sup>18</sup> “Engaging Communities.” *Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg. 9---11

pace itself and be able to identify clear limits of capacity. The organization's mission should always serve as the first reference point when deciding on next steps (i.e. development of special programs/activities for the community and artists, etc.).

- Long-term relationships: Long term relationships are an invaluable component of what supports and drives artist communities.<sup>19</sup> While the Center is in its early stages of relationship building through community partnerships and artist support, there should be a clear plan of action for sustaining them. Artist residencies' primary relationships are those that are established with artist. It would be my recommendation that the Center set forth a plan of follow up and continued connectivity, thus extending the relationship between artist and institution beyond a 1 to 3 month residency cycle. In addition, incorporating local artists and addressing their needs is another area of importance. The Center has done an amazing job thus far of being a resource to local artists through the NOLA Studio Program. Moving forward, JMC should consider expanding its professional development and workshops to serve a broader artist pool. As a local artist, if the only way to truly interact with and learn from the Center is to apply for a slot within a competitive residency program, a cycle of siloed experience is regenerated and this can often times lead to resentment. Lastly, building relationships with other organizations is key to any residencies growth. Community

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<sup>19</sup> "Engaging Communities." *Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg. 11---12

partnership and collaboration with other institutions comes with several benefits, including strong, sustainable programs, creative problem solving, and increased reach and impact. Thus far JMC has done its fair share of giving, and should work to ensure that relationships are reciprocal. Rather than partnership being a barter system of give and take, the Center and its affiliates should come together and workshop ways in which they can learn from each other and contribute to the betterment of New Orleans as a whole.

- Voluntary Participation: AAC research shows that 37% of artist residencies indicate that some sort of public presentation from artists is expected during their stay, and 50% have optional participation.<sup>20</sup> When incorporating artists into communities, residencies face the challenge of deciding what the preceding “option” should be. As much as we want artists to be involved with community engagement, this should not interfere with the mission of providing “time and space” or “retreat.” As the Center develops its guidelines for artists and community involvement, it should be mindful of how artists are required to participate. Most artists are grateful for the time and resources provided during a residency period, and are happy to give back through engagement. This should, in most cases, be more of a strong encouragement rather than a hard expectation.

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<sup>20</sup> “Engaging Communities.” *Lessons Learned*. 2004. Pg. 12

- Benefits to the artist: Additionally it is the responsibility of the organization to bridge the connection between action and benefit as it pertains to artists and community engagement. The text describes the following points as ways in which the artists are enriched by communities:
  - Connection with an audience: Community engagement acts as reinforcement for creativity and feedback.
  - Opportunities for exploration and discovery: Engagement can be used as a platform to test new processes and ideas.
  - Integral to artist's creative process: Artists whose work is more socially invested can utilize community engagement as a way to further develop work.
  - Personal satisfaction: Needless to say, working in isolation can become cumbersome. Inserting oneself into a community is a great way to create interactions that, given other circumstances, may never have occurred.

When collecting feedback, the Center should use positive, impactful data to their advantage. If others can see how community engagement positively affected past residency alum, they may be more apt to participate during their cycle.



## CONCLUSION

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In a short period of time, the Joan Mitchell Center has made significant headway. The internal acknowledgment of the organization's accomplishments is something that I feel gets overlooked occasionally. In this field, it can become very easy to fall into the paradigm of "we can always do more." Recognizing the responsibility and position that comes with being part of a foundation while also balancing actions with capacity and capability is going to be a challenge for JMC, primarily because it has functioned in such a variety of ways to so many individuals and organizations.

Staying in alignment with its mission and being consistent with setting clear boundaries and expectations of what is being offered and what is anticipated from others will create the greatest benefit for the center and the community it serves. Also, allowing the Center to find its voice within New Orleans while remaining connected to New York will require time, patience, and understanding from all parties involved.

The early stages of development usually produce the most significant growing pains, and JMC has experienced its fair share. Internally, I would recommend that the Foundation assess how all of its programs communicate and share information. It is to be expected that the Center would be somewhat disjointed from other programs due to its location. However, that should not excuse staff from staying updated on their colleagues' work and departmental functions. In addition, in order for the Center to function as the on-the-ground representative of the Foundation in New Orleans, it is imperative that JMC staff is

able to speak comfortably about the New York office in a well-informed way.

Overall, I do believe that Joan's wishes and legacy are being executed and honored in a way that will create a lasting impact within the arts community for many years to come.

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## **VITA**

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The author was born in Baton Rouge, Louisiana. She obtained her Bachelor's degree in Interdisciplinary Studies (Fine Art Concentration) from the University of Houston - Downtown. She returned to New Orleans in 2012 to pursue an MA in Arts Administration, and became the Joan Mitchell Center's Program Associate for Community Engagement in August 2014.

## **APPENDICIES**

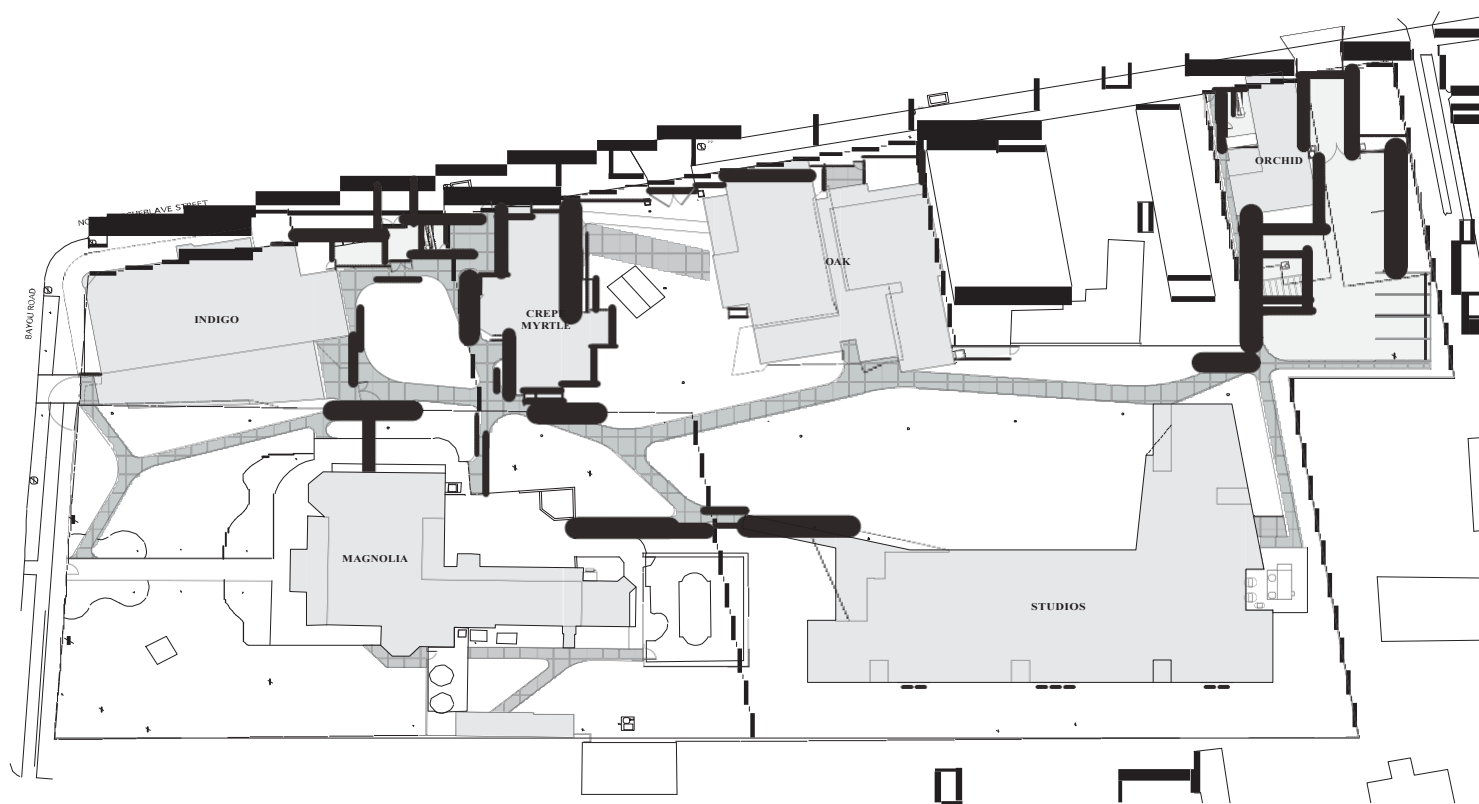
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1. Community Partners
2. Site Development
  - a. General Site Plan
3. JMC Programmatic Overview
4. Residency Handout

## COMMUNITY PARTNERS

### 2010-2014

24 Hour Comic Book Day	KIDsmART
A Studio in the Woods	Ladies Make Parades
Alliance for Artist Communities	LongVue House & Gardens
Alternate Roots	Louisiana Cultural Economy
American Cancer Society	Foundation (LCEF)
American Friends Society	New Orleans Center for Creative
Antenna Gallery	Arts (NOCCA)
Arts and Democracy	New Orleans Cooking Experience
Arts Council of New Orleans	(NOCE)
Artspot Productions	New Orleans Film Society (NOFS)
Ashé Cultural Arts Center	New Orleans Museum of Art (NOMA)
Community Book Center	New Orleans Redevelopment
Contemporary Arts Center	Authority (NORA)
Creative Alliance of New Orleans	New Orleans Video Access Center
Creative Capital	(NOVAC)
Cross Roads Institute	Pelican Bomb
CubaNola	Press Street
Downtown Neighborhoods	Prospect New Orleans
Improvement Association (DNIA)	Tekrema Center Art & Culture
French Consulate of New Orleans	The Front
Greater New Orleans Foundation	The Renaissance Project
(GNOF)	Tulane Graduate Studies
Hand in Glove	Association
Inaugural Black Mardi Gras Indian	Urban Bush Women
Retreat	WWOZ
Junebug Productions	Xavier University



**JOAN MITCHELL CENTER**  
SITE PLAN  
LEE LEDBETTER AND ASSOCIATES / OFFICE OF JONATHAN TATE

## JOAN MITCHELL CENTER PROGRAMMATIC OVERVIEW

### ARTIST SUPPORT PROGRAMS

#### New Orleans Local Artist (NOLA) Studio Program

The NOLA Studio Program is a year-long studio residency program for ten New Orleans-based visual artists, which began in November 2013. Artists receive a free studio and a materials stipend for five months, as well as professional development support over the full length of the program. This program was developed to support the artistic careers of local painters and sculptors whose work exhibits exceptional potential and who have demonstrated a need for a dedicated workspace.

Artists are selected to represent a diversity of artistic styles and practices, and who show a passion for New Orleans and a strong commitment to their own communities, as well as to the contemporary arts scene in the city. Members of the New Orleans arts and cultural community nominate artists, whose work is then viewed for consideration through an anonymous process by an independent jury panel composed of prominent visual artists, curators, and art educators. All finalists participate in interviews with Joan Mitchell Center staff to discuss firsthand their need for a dedicated workspace and professional development support.

#### NOLA Studio Program 2013-2014 Artists

Currently in studios (April 15 – September 15, 2014):

- Norah Lovell Painter, [www.norahlovell.com](http://www.norahlovell.com)
- Mario Padilla, Painter and Sculptor, [www.mariopadilla.com](http://www.mariopadilla.com)
- Dave Greber, Installation Artist, [www.thesculpted.com](http://www.thesculpted.com)
- Aaron Collier, Painter, [www.postmedium.com/aaroncollier](http://www.postmedium.com/aaroncollier)
- Jer'Lisa Devezin, Painter and Sculptor (website in progress)

Previous five artists in studios (November 1, 2013 – April 1, 2014):

- Ayo Scott, Painter, [www.ayoscott.com](http://www.ayoscott.com)
- Brooke Pickett, Painter, [www.brookepickett.com](http://www.brookepickett.com)
- Carl Joe Williams, Painter & Sculptor, [www.carljoewilliams.com](http://www.carljoewilliams.com)



- Katrina Andry, Printmaker, [www.katrina-andry.com](http://www.katrina-andry.com)
- Rontherin Ratliff, Sculptor, [www.rontherin.com](http://www.rontherin.com)

### Artist In Residence (AIR) Program

Designed to be the core program of the Joan Mitchell Center, the Artist In Residence Program will provide artists with time and space for uninterrupted work, as well as the opportunity to engage with the community through open studio events and artist talks. This program is being developed to support painters and sculptors who create work of exceptional quality, by providing a dedicated creative space that can function as a catalyst to their practice and career.

To establish best practices for the residency, the Joan Mitchell Center ran a pilot session of the Artist In Residence Program in January of 2013. The Center welcomed twenty-four nationally recognized visual artists to participate, selected from applications submitted by previous recipients of the Joan Mitchell Foundation's Painters & Sculptors and MFA Grant Programs. During this test phase, artists were provided lodging at the Center and the use of nearby studios, located on historic Rampart Street in the French Quarter. The use of the off-site studios allowed the development of the Artist In Residence Program during the interim period of construction of the Center's on-site artist studio building. Slated to open in the summer of 2015, the Joan Mitchell Center studios will feature eight studios, a digital media lab and communal meeting space.

#### Joan Mitchell Center Pilot Artists In Residence, 2013

John Ahearn Rollin	Gwen Fabricant	Raymond Saa
Beamish Rosalyn	Rema Ghuloum	Alison Saar
Bodycomb Terrence	Ed Giordano, Jr.	Vitus Shell
Campagna Kaili	Mei-ling Hom	Arthur Simms
Chun	Sarah McEneaney	Whiting Tennis
Bruce Davenport, Jr.	Kayla Mohammadi	Thomas Tucker
Keith Duncan	Ryan Pierce	Samantha Wall
Dahlia Elsayed	John Powers	Mel Ziegler

## PUBLIC PROGRAMS

As part of the Joan Mitchell Center's commitment to provide a forum for artists and to be a welcoming, inclusive gathering place for artists and the broader community of New Orleans, the Joan Mitchell Center curates and produces public programming, creating events that support values of community, diversity and social equity.

**Open Studios and Artist Talks** are key elements of the Artist In Residence (AIR) Program and the New Orleans Local Artist (NOLA) Studio Program. During Open Studios, the public is invited to view work in progress and engage directly with the resident artists. Artist Talks offer more in-depth presentations by visiting artists, allowing greater insight into their work and process.

**Community Coffees** serve as an open house for the Joan Mitchell Center and as a networking space for the New Orleans community. Community Coffees offer an opportunity for artists, curators, writers and arts administrators staying at the Joan Mitchell Center to connect with locals in the neighborhood.

**Visual MashUp**, a semi-annual series, is an informal presentation and after hours networking event that promotes the work of artists. For each event, two or more painters and sculptors are “mashed up” with artists from other disciplines and geographical locations. The Visual MashUp offers a unique opportunity for a partner to curate the group of presenters and to host an interactive networking event.

**Town Hall Convenings** are panel discussions with a call and response style format that allow the larger arts community to respond to relevant and timely topics. The Joan Mitchell Center embraces a role as a safe space for dialogues that have the potential of shifting the current landscape. Town Hall Convenings allow the Joan Mitchell Center to collaborate with local, national and international partners.

## ARTIST RESIDENCY PROGRAM | LAUNCHING FALL 2015

*'New Orleans is a hyper creative city. It is common to visit and become entranced by the cultural practices, values and expectations that provide cohesion, mutuality and celebration of family and community. They help to maintain the sense of self and appreciation for the journeys of life that ones forebears have travelled and the principles by which they lived. This, they say, is to be 'rooted''*

- Joan Mitchell Center Director, Gia Hamilton

### OVERVIEW:

The Joan Mitchell Center acknowledges the relationship of the artist to the whole community as a valuable, socially engaged and responsive contributor to society. The Center is focused on creating an inclusive gathering place, a place for innovation and transformation, supporting values of community, diversity and social equity; providing a forum for artists and to be a welcoming, inclusive gathering place for the arts and the broader community of New Orleans. It is the intentional work of the Center to be rooted in the mission, values and goals of the Joan Mitchell Foundation, while integrating the Center's programming with the cultural traditions that already exist in New Orleans; embodying the meaning of engaging in 'placed-based work'.

### PROGRAMMING:

The core program of the Center is its artist residency program, which will offer both time and space for artists to create work in a contemplative environment, as well as provide opportunities for visiting artists to engage with the local arts community and experience the rich cultural possibilities of New Orleans. As an urban residency program, the sense of being rooted and and community engagement are integral to the work we do. We look forward to developing relationships between artists, community partners, and the global arts community.

### PROGRAMMATIC STAFF

Gia Hamilton, Director

Tara Foster, Program Associate for Artist Support

Sharbreon Plummer, Program Associate for Community Engagement

For more information, email [info@joanmitchellcenter.org](mailto:info@joanmitchellcenter.org).